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SUBJECT: FARHAD ALIYEV'S WIFE CLAIMS AUTHORITIES SEEK  
CONFESSION FOR PARDON; DETAINED ALIYEV AIDE COMMITS SUICIDE

REF: BAKU 904

Classified By: DCM Jason P. Hyland for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) In an August 23 meeting with Poloff, Sabina Aliyeva, wife of detained ex-minister Farhad Aliyev, alleged that mid-level GOAJ officials have been pressuring Farhad Aliyev to sign a confession in return for being pardoned. Aliyeva claims that her husband has rejected the confession in part because it says that the U.S. Government was colluding with Aliyev in his alleged effort to foment a coup, an allegation Aliyev and his wife unequivocally deny.

¶2. (C) Aliyeva told Poloff that she has met with unnamed GOAJ officials in an effort to cut some sort of a deal or at least dissuade them from prosecuting her husband for a crime she says he did not commit, but the meetings thus far have come to no avail. Aliyeva also said that she has fired one of the lawyers on her husband's defense team, Irada Javadova, and hired Jamil Hasanli, an independent (pro-opposition) Member of Parliament who comes from the same region in southern Azerbaijan as Aliyev. With Hasanli's appointment Aliyeva hopes to give the Committee to Protect Aliyev's Rights new impetus and a higher profile. Poloff told Aliyeva that the USG position was that Azerbaijan has a positive obligation to uphold international standards for the rule of law in the investigation against Farhad Aliyev and all the detainees accused of plotting a coup.

¶3. (SBU) Separately, the Ministry of Justice and Prosecutor General's office reported publicly August 25 that former Ministry of Economic Development official and Aliyev aide, Alihuseyn Saliyev, committed suicide August 24 in hospital. The press had begun reporting August 24 this news. Saliyev was one among the group of former Ministry of Economic Development officials arrested and accused of allegedly plotting a coup last fall in collusion with Farhad Aliyev, former Health Minister Ali Insanov and Presidential Aide Akif Muradverdiyev. Saliyev was in detention at the Justice Ministry's hospital receiving care for hernia and reportedly slit his wrists in the early morning hours. Opposition newspapers blamed the GOAJ prolonged detention of Alihusyen and what it called a spurious investigation into the alleged coup plot by Farhad Aliyev for driving Alihuseyn to suicide. Human rights monitors will visit the hospital and morgue to verify the events and investigate further this weekend.

¶4. (C) Comment. Something is clearly afoot in terms of the case. Aliyeva, who previously has been visibly distraught while discussing her husband's case, was relaxed and made a point of reassuring Poloff of her own well-being. Her allegations that Aliyev was being pressured to implicate the USG strikes us as an effort to gain increased USG engagement on Farhad Aliyev's case. We will continue to press for due process and respect for basic civil liberties of all the defendants in this case. End Comment.

